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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHINA'S ANTI-SECESSION LAW

¶1. Summary: News coverage of major Taiwan newspapers March 17 focused on follow-up U.S. reaction and Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's first public statement on China's Anti-Secession Law. All newspapers reported that the U.S. House of Representatives was poised to approve a resolution March 16 to express grave concerns about the law. The centrist "China Times" reported in a page-two story that Taiwan has urged China through the United States to make substantial good-will moves toward the island. The pro-unification "United Daily News," in a page-two story headlined "This time Ah-bian no longer plays the role of `troublemaker,'" pointed out that President Chen has refrained from provoking Beijing leaders. In addition to supporting Chen's statement, the pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran an editorial urging all of Taiwan's political parties to join hands in the March 26 rally and seek international support for Taiwan. Another pro-independence newspaper, "Taiwan Daily," also said in its editorial that Taiwan should export democracy rather than agricultural products to China. The English language "Taipei Times" editorial compared the current PRC regime to that of Hitler's before World War II. End summary.

A) "All of Taiwan's Political Parties Should Speak for Taiwan Before the People"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" editorialized [circulation: 800,000] (3/17):

". After President Chen Shui-bian made the comments [about China's anti-secession law], the expectations of the Taiwan people are: first, how can political parties resolve their differences, face the common enemy [i.e. China], stand hand-in-hand in front of the people, and speak for Taiwan's Destiny. Taiwan's political parties should not only stand in front of their people during the March 26 one-million-people rally, but also stand impartially and stay away from confrontational moods when discussing national affairs and seeking resolution of future difficulties. Second, under the current situation when opinions in the international community are friendly to Taiwan, political parties should remind themselves that they would disappear if Taiwan no longer existed. One should know that situations change quickly in international relations, and opportunities are hard to grasp. What political parties in Taiwan should do is to try their best and seek help from the international community. They should also deliberate together how to become pro-active rather than passive, how to strengthen Taiwan's strategic position, how to obtain political and military support from the international community in order to take advantage of the `favorable situation' and turn it into substantial results. ."

B) "Taiwan Should Not Be Bewildered by China's Manipulation of the `Stick' and `Carrot' Policies"

The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" [circulation: 150,000] editorialized (3/17):

". Like President Chen Shui-bian said, Taiwan's specialties that China needs the most and Taiwan would be most happy to provide are not agricultural products, but the system of democracy, comprehensive liberties, and the protection of human rights. If some politicians from the Pan-Blue alliance intend to foster cross-Straight exchanges and to reduce the hostility of both sides of the Strait, they should work on promoting the three Taiwan specialties that President Chen mentioned. This [would provide] the greatest protection for Taiwan's security and welfare."

C) "Appeasement Didn't Stop Hitler"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 300,000] commented in an editorial (3/17):

". Beijing has passed a law - the `Anti-Secession' Law

- to authorize war and legitimize future military expansion. The law is clearly aimed at Taiwan. In the past few years, Chinese nationalists have repeatedly asked, 'Where should the sea port for China's warships be - in the Taiwan Strait or the Pacific Ocean?' The question is where will China stop? Will it also lay claim to Singapore and Penang as overseas territories of China on the grounds that Chinese people have historically resided there?

"Moreover, the attitude of Europe's current leaders toward the autocratic Chinese regime is astonishingly similar to those of Chamberlain and Daladier when dealing with Hitler. French and German political leaders should learn from history when dealing with the cross-strait issue and the lifting of EU arms embargo on China in order to avoid a repeat of the tragic Munich Pact.

"Although Taiwan is a long way from Europe, its passionate pursuit for democracy and freedom is not any different from that of the EU's member states. When it comes to the cross-Strait issue, the EU leaders' callous disregard for a democratic nation in Asia is tragic. We can only hope it does not lead to a greater tragedy."

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